

Wisconsin State Legislature

SENATE CHAIR
ALBERTA DARLING

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P.O. Box 7882
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ASSEMBLY CHAIR
ROBIN VOS

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Madison, WI 53708-8953
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Joint Committee on Finance *100TH ANNIVERSARY 1911 - 2011*

MEMORANDUM

To: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Alberta Darling
Representative Robin Vos

Date: October 3, 2011

Re: 14-Day Passive Review Approval – DNR

Pursuant to s. 23.0917(6m), Stats., attached is a 14-day passive review request from the Department of Natural Resources, received on October 3, 2011.

Please review the material and notify **Senator Darling** or **Representative Vos** no later than **Thursday, October 20, 2011**, if you have any concerns about the request or if you would like the Committee to meet formally to consider it.

Also, please contact us if you need further information.

Attachments

AB:RV:jm

State of Wisconsin
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
101 S. Webster Street
Box 7921
Madison WI 53707-7921

Scott Walker, Governor
Cathy Stepp, Secretary
Telephone 608-266-2821
FAX 608-267-3679
TTY Access via relay - 711



OCT 03 2011

The Honorable Alberta Darling, Co-Chair
Committee on Joint Finance
State Capitol, Room 317 East
PO Box 7882
Madison WI 53707-7882

The Honorable Robin Vos, Co-Chair
Committee on Joint Finance
State Capitol, Room 309 East
PO Box 8953
Madison WI 53707-53708

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Vos:

Pursuant to s.23.0917(6m), Wis. Stats., the Department is notifying you as co-chairs of the committee on Joint Finance of a proposed 322.53 acre land purchase from Florence County using funds from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

The purchase price is \$362,000. Miscellaneous costs are estimated to be \$6,850 for appraisal fees, title insurance and transfer tax. Total stewardship expenditure will be \$368,850.

On September 27, 2011, the Natural Resources Board approved the transaction by a vote of 6 - 0. I have attached the materials presented to the Board.

As provided in s.23.0917(6m), if the Department does not receive notification of the scheduling of a hearing from either of the JFC co-chairpersons within, 14 working days from today, the Department will forward the proposal to the Governor for his consideration. If there are any questions about the proposal, please call Richard Steffes at (608) 266-0201

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cathy Stepp
for Cathy Stepp
Attachment

RECEIVED
OCT 03 2011

BY: *J. Finance*

**SUBJECT: LAND ACQUISITION AND PROJECT BOUNDARY MODIFICATION - SPREAD EAGLE BARRENS
NATURAL AREA - FLORENCE COUNTY**

FOR: SEPTEMBER 2011 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Richard Steffes

SUMMARY: The Department has negotiated an agreement to purchase two parcels totaling 322.53 acres in fee title from Florence County for the Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area. The first parcel is 320 acres in size and is located directly adjacent to, but outside the Natural Area. The second parcel of land is a 2.53-acre lot located within the Natural Area project boundary about 3 miles northeast from the larger parcel. Purchase price for the total property is \$362,000.

For many years the Department leased land from Florence County as a Wildlife Area with a focus on sharp-tailed grouse. The Board established the Spread Eagle Barrens Natural Area in 1993 to protect and restore the larger of two remaining pine barrens/bracken grasslands in northeastern Wisconsin and most of the leased land was purchased by the Department. A mosaic of several different ecological communities, the primary goal of the project is to protect the Pine Barrens community and associated flora and fauna that require large expanses of open vegetation. The project area includes pine barrens, bracken grassland, northern wet forest, aquatic resources, and northern dry forests.

Pine barrens originally covered 2.3 million acres, or 7% of Wisconsin's pre-European settlement landscape. Oak barrens covered 1.8 million acres, or 5% of the pre-European settlement landscape. Barrens acreage is estimated at around 50,000 acres, 2.1% of the original acreage, but much of this land is more severely degraded and/or has only just entered the restoration phase.

The 320 acre parcel is County Forest land located outside of the project boundary that was recently logged. Remaining timber includes aspen and mixed pine saplings. The parcel is nearly all upland, with less than 10 acres of lowland in the northwestern corner of the parcel. Topography is rolling to hilly, with sandy upland soil-types conducive to barrens habitat. The parcel has seasonal access along Fire Lane Road. It is bordered to the east by Department land and otherwise surrounded by County Forest land. There is an existing snowmobile trail on this property. This land is more appropriate for natural area and barrens management than for county forest due to sandy, drought prone soil. The second parcel is 2.53 acres in size and is within the project boundary. The property is partially wooded with open barrens land as well.

Acquiring the 322.53 acres will continue public use for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross country skiing and will better protect the natural and scenic resources of these sites by allowing for barrens habitat management activities.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approve the purchase of 322.53 acres of land for \$362,000.00 for the Spread Eagle Barrens Natural Area and approve modification of the project boundary to include the entire land.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

No ☒ Fiscal Estimate Required
No ☒ Environmental Assessment of Impact Statement Required
No ☐ Background Memo

Yes ☐ Attached
Yes ☐ Attached
Yes ☒ Attached

APPROVED:

Real Estate Director, Richard E. Steffes - LF/6

Administrator, Kurt Thiede - AD/8

Secretary, Cathy Stepp - AD/8

Date

Date

Date

cc: S. Miller - LF/6
R. Steffes - LF/6
L. Ross - AD/8
L. Ostendorf - ER/6
J. Gozdziński - NOR/Spooner

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

State of Wisconsin

DATE: August 23, 2011
TO: Scott Walker
FROM: Cathy Stepp
SUBJECT: Proposed Land Acquisition, Florence County Tract, File # NA 20072,

FILE REF: NA 20072

1. PARCEL DESCRIPTION:

Spread Eagle Barrens Natural Area
Florence County

Grantor:

Patrick Smith
Florence County Forest Administrator
4842 Forestry Drive
Florence, WI 54121

Acres: 322.53

Price: \$362,000

Appraised Value: \$362,000 (total of two parcels)

Interest: Fee Title Purchase

Improvements: None

Location: The property is located in Florence County 8 miles southeast of the Village of Florence.

Land Description: The subject land is rolling to hilly with sandy upland..

Covertypes Breakdown:

Type	Acreage
Upland Woodland	312.53
Lowland Woodland	10.0

Total: 322.53

Zoning: Open Forest

Present Use: Recreation & Forestry

Proposed Use: Recreation and Resource Protection

Tenure: 7 years (2.53 acres parcel); many decades (320 acre parcel)

Property Taxes: Exempt

Option Date: July 21, 2011

Stewardship Land Access: This property will be open to the public for all nature based outdoor recreational activities to include hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross country skiing.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

The Department has negotiated an agreement to purchase two parcels totaling 322.53 acres in fee title from Florence County for the Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area. The first parcel is 320 acres in size and is located directly adjacent to, but outside the Natural Area. The second parcel of land is a 2.53-acre lot located



within the Natural Area project boundary about 3 miles northeast from the larger parcel. Purchase price for the total property is \$362,000.

For many years the Department leased land from Florence County as a Wildlife Area with a focus on sharp-tailed grouse. The Board established the Spread Eagle Barrens Natural Area in 1993 to protect and restore the larger of two remaining pine barrens/bracken grasslands in northeastern Wisconsin and most of the leased land was purchased by the Department.

Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area is the largest existing representative site of pine barrens and bracken grassland in northeastern Wisconsin. Dunbar Barrens State Natural Area is the only other barrens/bracken grassland project in northeast Wisconsin. Spread Eagle Barrens occupies about 8,500 acres. The land's surface features were formed by glaciation; rolling collapsed outwash plains are characteristic of Spread Eagle Barrens.

Pine barrens originally covered 2.3 million acres, or 7% of Wisconsin's pre-European settlement landscape. Oak barrens covered 1.8 million acres, or 5% of the pre-European settlement landscape. Barrens acreage is estimated at around 50,000 acres, 2.1% of the original acreage, but much of this land is more severely degraded and/or has only just entered the restoration phase.

Bracken grasslands occur in depressions where frosts limit the growth of woody vegetation and have significantly declined due to fire control, tree planting, and aspen sprouting following clear-cutting of adjacent forest. As a result they have often converted to forest except on sites such as frost pockets where growing season frosts have inhibited tree growth.

Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area is dominated by scattered jack pine, red pine, scrub oak, and quaking aspen. The sandy soils support an understory of sedges, bracken and sweet fern, slender wheat grass, muhly grass, poverty oats, hazelnut, serviceberry, blueberry, and willows. Other plant communities include northern wet forest and northern dry forest. Frost pockets, treeless depressions where frost may occur at any time of year, punctuate the landscape. Sedges, lichens, and other plant species have adapted to this harsh microclimate and are able to dominate these low-lying areas. In contrast, bracken fern, Jack pine and other small trees dominate the uplands where they are interspersed with grasses. The lower reaches of the Pine River, a designated Wild River, traverse the site and the Menominee River forms the property's eastern boundary.

Part of Spread Eagle Barrens is owned by WDNR, and the remainder is managed under a conservation easement with WE Energies. The site supports some area-sensitive species like northern harrier and upland sandpiper, as well as birds that key in strongly on specific habitat structural features such as chestnut-sided warbler, clay-colored sparrow, and rufous-sided towhee. Restoration and management is accomplished through a combination of timber harvesting and prescribed burning. Non-motorized uses including, bird watching and blueberry picking, are available to visitors.

Conservation Opportunity Area: Spread Eagle Barrens is a upper midwest/regional significance landscape for bracken grassland habitat. Species of Greatest Conservation Need include wood turtle, black-billed cuckoo, brown thrasher, field sparrow, northern harrier, least flycatcher, upland sandpiper, vesper sparrow, whip-poor-will, northern flying squirrel, woodland jumping mouse, and a number of butterflies and moths including *Chrysus* arctic, tawny crescent, Henry's elfin, hoary elfin, pink-edged sulphur, Leonard's skipper, cobweb skipper, Indian skipper, and graceful clearwing.

Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail: Spread Eagle Barrens is one of three "waypoints" in Florence County on the Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail. There is also an excellent display on Spread Eagle Barrens at the Florence Wild Rivers Interpretive Center.

Important Bird Area: Spread Eagle Barrens is one of 86 Important Bird Areas in Wisconsin. "This site harbors a full assemblage of breeding birds associated with pine barrens, including rare or declining species such as northern harrier and upland sandpiper. Other priority species some of which are quite numerous here, include brown thrasher, chestnut-sided warbler, clay-colored sparrow, and rose-breasted grosbeak.

Land Legacy Report: Spread Eagle Barrens is one of listed in the Department's Land Legacy Report and received four stars for Conservation Significance and two stars for Recreation Potential out of five stars.

Managing Habitat for Grassland Birds – A Guide for Wisconsin: Spread Eagle Barrens is one of two priority landscapes in northeast Wisconsin identified as a property for managing habitat for grassland birds. Priority grassland habitats at Spread Eagle Barrens include open barrens, diverse barrens, and brush prairie barrens.

Many rare or declining species of large open landscapes live here including northern harrier, rose-breasted grosbeak and upland sandpiper. Other birds include bald eagle, northern raven, winter wren, eastern bluebird, warbling vireo, Nashville, chestnut-sided, pine, and mourning warblers, clay-colored sparrow, common nighthawk, eastern towhee, and Brewer's blackbird. Mammals include black bear, fisher, badger, coyote, red fox, and white tailed deer. Other uncommon species found include wood turtle (state-threatened) and autumnal water-starwort and skillet clubtail dragonfly.

The property consists of two parcels of land totaling 322.53 acres of land, most of which is 320 acres of County Forest land that was recently logged. Remaining timber includes aspen and mixed pine saplings. The parcel is nearly all upland, with less than 10 acres of lowland in the northwestern corner of the parcel. Topography is rolling to hilly, with sandy upland soil-types conducive to barrens habitat. The parcel has seasonal access along Fire Lane Road. It is bordered to the east by State Natural Area land and otherwise surrounded by County Forest land. There is an existing snowmobile trail on this property. The 320 acres are more appropriate for natural area and barrens management than county forest due to sandy, drought prone soil.

The second parcel is 2.53 acres in size and is within the project boundary. The property is partially wooded with open barrens land as well. Topography is mostly level with sandy soils. Timber includes pine and aspen and provides an aesthetic appeal. Access is along an easement road, which forms the western boundary of the property, though the road is undeveloped and marked as a snowmobile trail. The property is bordered on three sides by State Natural Area land, two of which are other lots within the subdivision. This parcel will provide blocking for contiguous access between areas of state land.

The Department recommends that the subject parcels be acquired in fee title and that the project boundary for the Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area be modified to include the 320-acre parcel. Acquiring the subject properties will continue public use for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross country skiing, and to better protect the natural and scenic resources of these sites by allowing for barrens habitat management activities.

3. FINANCING:

State Stewardship bond funds are anticipated:

Funds allotted to program:	Balance after proposed transaction:
\$975,000	\$591,280

4. ACQUISITION STATUS OF THE SPREAD EAGLE BARRENS NATURAL AREA:

Established: 1993

Acres Purchased to Date: 7,913.22

Acquisition Goal: 8,850.0 acres

Percent Complete: 89.41 %

Cost to Date: \$3,287,865.00

5. APPRAISALS:

Appraiser: William Steigerwaldt

Valuation Date: March 3, 2011

Appraised Value: \$352,000

Highest and Best Use: Recreational/Assemblage

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 320 Acres @ \$1,100 per acre: \$352,000
- b. market data approach used, 4 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$854 - \$1,164 per acre

Appraisal Review: Peter Wolter, 5/20/2011

Appraiser: William Steigerwaldt

Valuation Date: March 3, 2011

Appraised Value: \$10,000

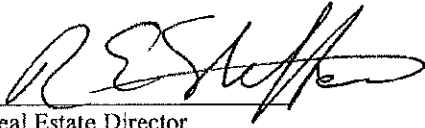
Highest and Best Use: Recreation/Seasonal Residential

Allocation of Values:

- a. land: 2.53 acres @ \$3,953 per acre: \$10,000
- b. market data approach used, 5 comparable sales cited
- c. adjusted value range: \$6,983 - \$15,960 per acre

Appraisal Review: Peter Wolter, 5/18/2011

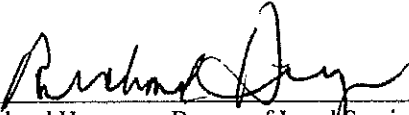
RECOMMENDED:



Richard E. Steffes, Real Estate Director

8-23-11

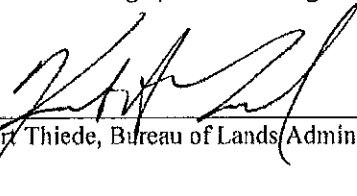
Date



Richard Henneger, Bureau of Legal Services

8/23/11

Date

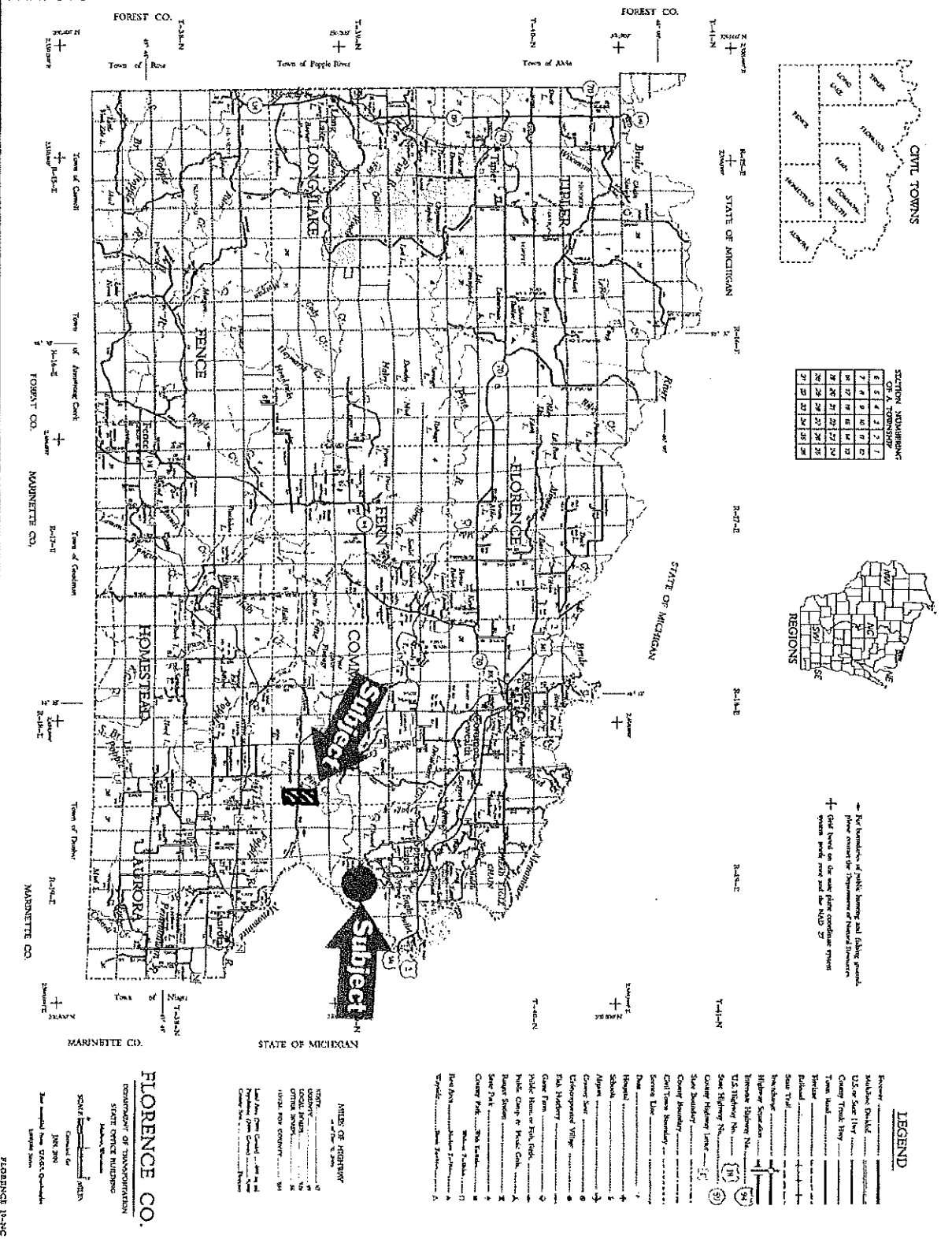


Kurt Thiede, Bureau of Lands Administrator

8/24/11

Date

RES:sjs








Florence County Fee Acquisition

Spread Eagle Barrens
Natural Area

NA 20072

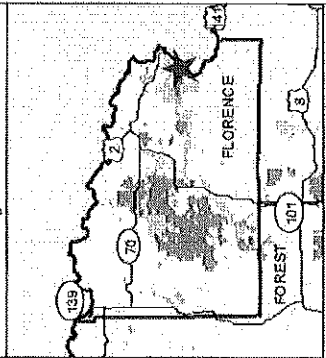
T39N R18E Secs 25 & 36
T39N R19E Sec 21
Town of Commonwealth
Florence County
(322.53 acres--option)

Subject Parcel

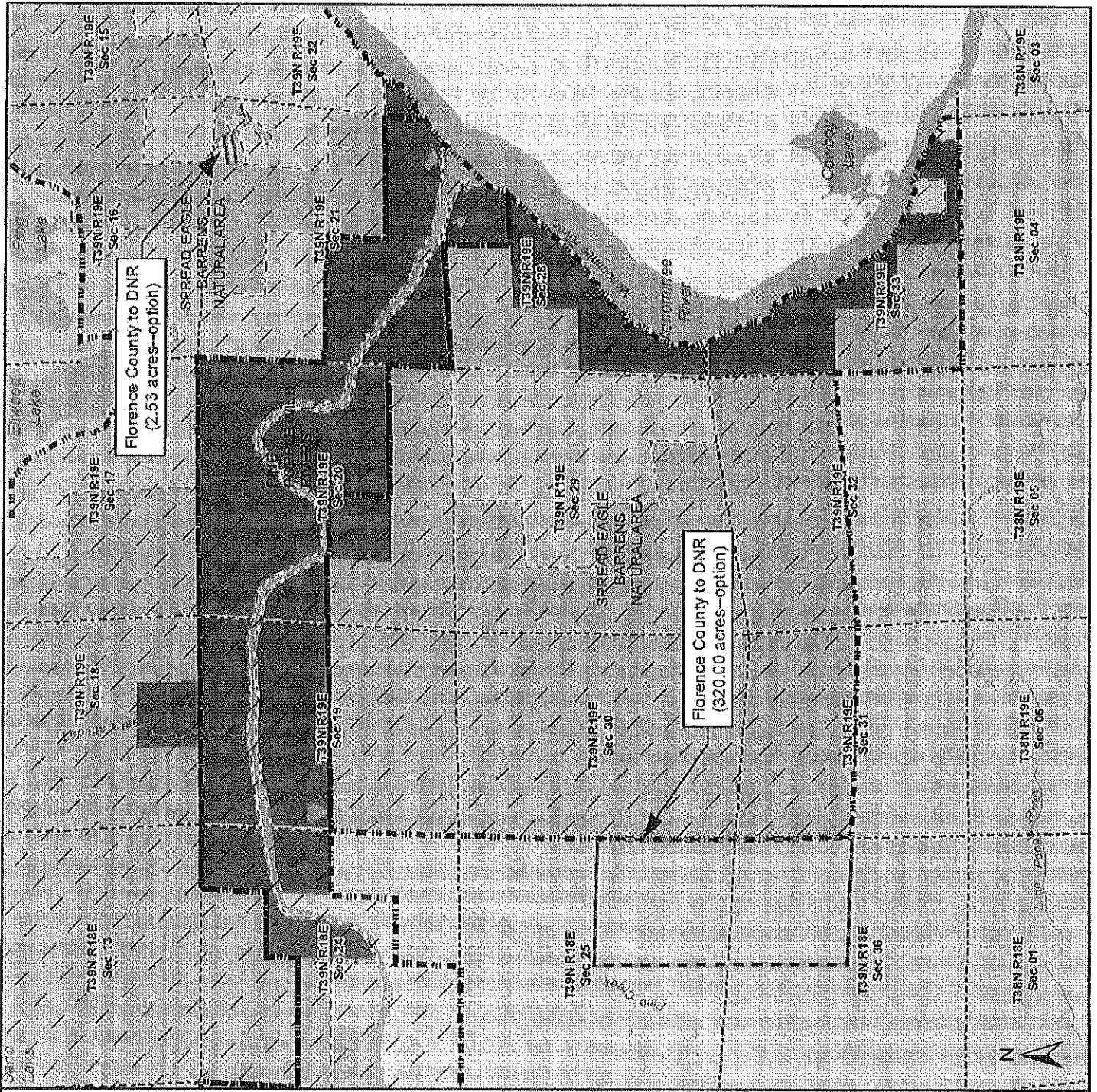
-  Project Boundary
-  State Natural Area
-  WDNR Owned
-  WDNR Easement
-  PLSS Section Line



Florence County View



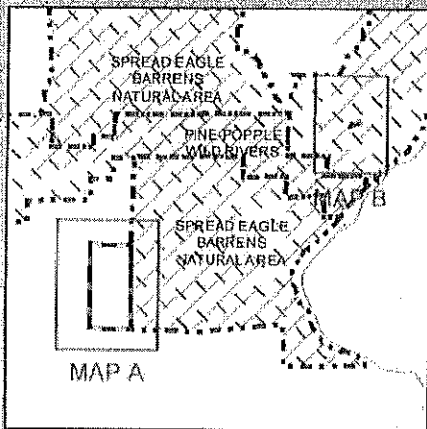
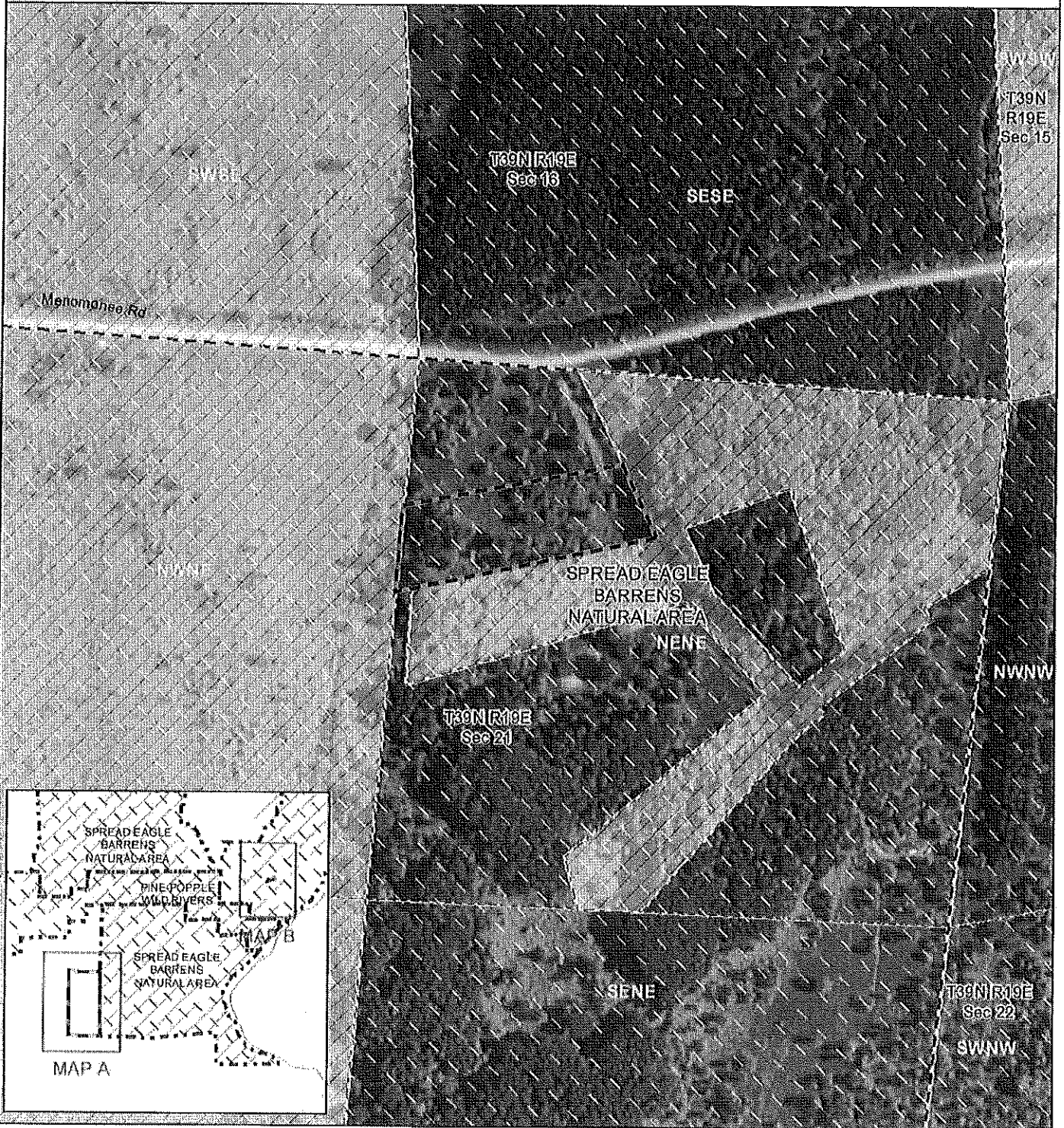
Subject Property



Florence County Fee Acquisition

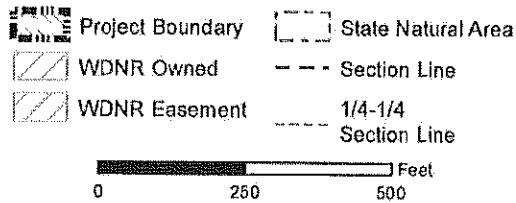
MAP B

T39N R19E Sec 21, Town of Commonwealth, Florence County



**Spread Eagle Barrens
Natural Area
NA 20072**

 Subject Parcel



August 8, 2011
Real Estate Section
Bureau of Facilities and Lands

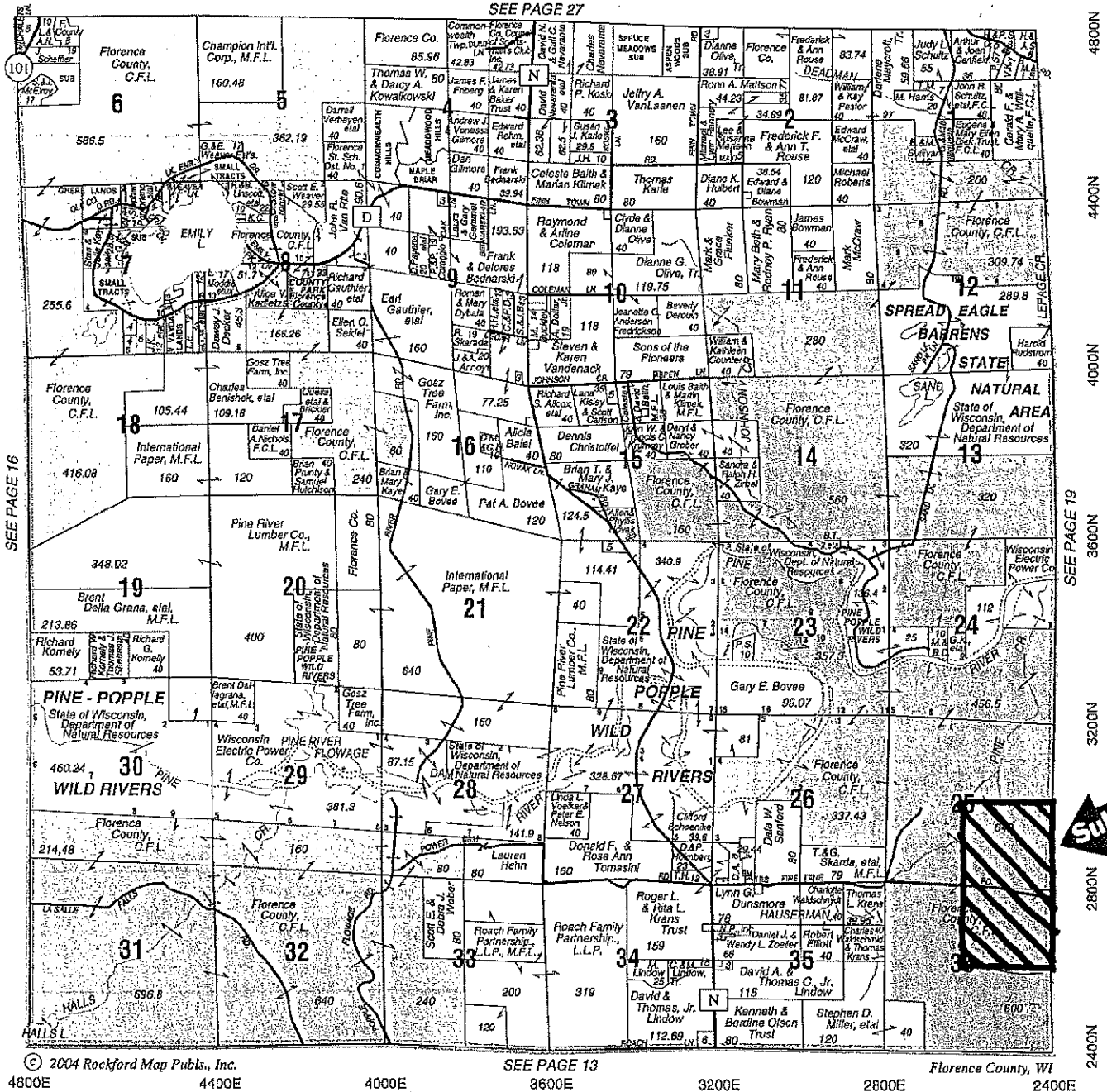


SOUTH
PART

COMMONWEALTH

T.39N.-R.18E.

SEE PAGE 27



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SEE PAGE 13

Florence County, WI

SEPTEMBER 2011
PLAT MAPS - 3.B.3

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SOUTHEAST
PART

FLORNC

NORTH
PART

AURORA

T.39N.-R.19E.

